

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Chairman of the Domestic Policy Subcommittee, and Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA), Ranking Member, introduced HR 3875, a bill to give New Orleans workers a better chance at receiving unpaid back wages for work they performed after Hurricane Katrina.

“Hearings of our committee revealed that a lawless workplace atmosphere followed Hurricane Katrina,” Kucinich said.

“Some employers apparently felt they did not have to pay their employees for all the hours they worked in the clean-up, rescue and recovery efforts. That was in significant part due to the Department of Labor office in New Orleans, which performed poorly in enforcing the law.

“Our bill was made necessary to prevent a legal double whammy from stripping workers of any hope of getting paid for the work they did. That would be the case when the statute of limitations extinguishes workers’ rights to unpaid wages.

“Our bill will preserve the unpaid wage and hour claims of Gulf Coast workers until the Secretary of Labor puts the proper emphasis on prosecuting lawbreakers and compelling them to pay the wages they have stolen from their workers,” Kucinich said.

The Domestic Policy Subcommittee, which has conducted an investigation into the ongoing legacy of poor wage and hour enforcement after Hurricane Katrina, heard from workers and advocates that many people had been the victims of violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act, at a hearing on June 26, 2007.

The Domestic Policy Subcommittee will hold a field hearing in New Orleans on Monday, October 29, to continue its examination of the Labor Department’s enforcement record.